



Compost Works: Vegetation Establishment

Compost Works

St. Mary of Nazareth Catholic Church in Des Moines used compost as a solution to patchy turf establishment in its front lawn. The issues were stemming from large shade trees on the church grounds that were killing the turf grasses.

Chemical fertilizers had not seemed to improve the condition of the area. Pete Kingsley, from St. Mary's maintenance staff, contacted Des Moines erosion control contractor Soil Tek for assistance.



Entrance area at St. Mary's where shade trees created a vegetation problem

The Situation

- ◆ Several stately trees were shading out the bluegrass
- ◆ Highly visible front entrance suffered "patchy" appearance

The Problems

- ◆ Inadequate turf establishment
- ◆ Fertilizer not an effective treatment
- ◆ Picturesque entrance compromised

The Answer

- ◆ Compost

Application

- ◆ Two-inch blanket of compost and seed combination helped give seed appropriate soil contact for germination
- ◆ Applied Metro Waste Authority's Premium Turf Gold half-inch screened compost
- ◆ Shade tolerant fescue seed mix that also tolerates unirrigated areas

Results

- ◆ Improved the soil by adding organic matter
- ◆ Provided prompt, thick groundcover
- ◆ Decreased erosion and weed growth
- ◆ Improved the appearance at entrance of church
- ◆ Improved water retention
- ◆ Late spring snow slowed progress, but full cover was achieved with improved spring weather



Full stand after application of fescue grass mix by entry to church.

“ The compost is working great. It's really done a wonder for the area, and it's a lot better than using chemicals. ”

Pete Kingsley, Maintenance Supervisor

Compost Works For:

Soil Incorporant

- Turf establishment
- Garden bed preparation
- Reclamation/remediation
- Nursery production
- Roadside vegetation

Surface Applied

- Garden bed mulch
- Erosion control media

Turf Topdressing

Manufactured Topsoil

Growing Media Component

- Container/potting substrates
- Landscape (e.g. rooftop, raised planters)
- Backfill mixes (tree and shrub plantings)
- Golf course (e.g. tee, green, divot mixes)

Physical Improvement

- Improves soil structure
- Moisture management

Chemical Balance

- Modifies and stabilizes pH
- Increases cation exchange capacity

Biological Impact

- Supplies nutrients and soil biota
- Suppresses plant diseases

Other Benefits

- Binds/degrades contaminants
- Binds nutrients

Project Date:
April 2004

Organization:
St. Mary of Nazareth
Catholic Church

Location:
4604 NW 47th Court
Des Moines

Application Method:
Blown 2" layer of
compost and seed

Contact:
Pete Kingsley
Maintenance
515-276-4042

